

Newsletter 291 February 2020

Description

Friends of Chiltern Mt Pilot NP Newsletter #291 Feb 2020

FRIENDS OF CHILTERN MT-PILOT NATIONAL PARK, Inc.

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Dear Friends,

The intensity and scale of bush fires this season in such a diverse range of locations leaves us feeling very grateful that the Park has been spared so far. The ever-present smoke emphasized of the magnitude of the fires even though they were at least 70 to 100 kilometres away from us. A relatively small fire near Wodonga that spread quickly and resulted in the loss of a home provided graphic evidence that things can change very quickly on very hot and windy days.

February Gathering

After several days of temperatures in the forties we were delighted to gather in much milder conditions. The task at hand was to remove more tree guards from the 2018 planting at the Grasslands Block. As we arrived at the big gum tree in the centre of the block, we were delighted to see a flock of about 8 or 9 Grey-crowned Babblers that scurried off. The trees and shrubs continue to thrive and outgrow the tree guards.





[Friends \(5346\) \(NB\)](#)

The photographs above (taken by Neville Bartlett) show just how much some of the trees have grown even though the seasons have been relatively dry. The native pines on the upper areas are reported as doing very well. Not many tree guards remain to be removed.

Weed Report â?? Mick Webster

Tony Murnane and I visited the olive groves off Coyles Track and Greenhood Track and found almost no regrowth in the areas burned 3 years ago so olives are (hopefully) under control in the Park.

Attention has turned to Wheel Cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) and a group Friends and Eldorado locals assisted ranger Hannah Clemen to release the Cochineal beetles, that she has nurtured, into a large infestation of cactus off Old Coach Road near Eldorado. Hannah has done a great job of setting up this release of beetles and came prepared with all of the tools needed to attach the infected pieces of cactus to the target plants using skewers. Progress will be carefully monitored, and hopefully more beetles can be released in future. The local landholders are keen to encourage the beetles by breeding more next season.

[Wheel Cactus \(4963\) \(NB\)](#)

Wheel Cactus infected with Cochineal beetles

[Wheel Cactus \(4968\) \(NB\)](#)

[Wheel Cactus \(5358\) \(NB\)](#)

[Wheel Cactus \(5359\) \(NB\)](#)

The efforts to attach pieces (not without injury)

Photos: Neville Bartlett

We would like any readers who come across patches of Wheel Cactus (not Prickly Pear) in the Park to inform us or the Rangers, with accurate locations if possible.

Regular watering of rare plants has continued over the very dry summer â?? *Banksia marginata*, *Acacia aspera* (Rough Wattle) and our lone *Rhagodia spinescens* (Hedge Saltbush).

The Saving of Harriet â?? Jo Mitlehner

This story about a juvenile Wedge-tailed Eagle came from Jo Mitlehner of Staghorn Wildlife Shelter via Eileen Collins. The story starts on the 29th December 2019 and all the photos were taken by Jo.

Deb from Harrierville Wildlife lives beside the Harrierville Cemetery.

She had been observing a young Wedge-tailed Eagle which was hanging around water.

Food was placed nearby and Deb observed the bird to see if any adults came to feed it.

After observing photos sent to her, Jo, from Staghorn Flat Wildlife Shelter, travelled to Harrierville to catch the bird. Jo and Deb observed Harriet for any adults coming to feed her. Juvenile Wedgetails are known to be on the ground after leaving the nest, taking a few days or even a week to learn to fly and become airborne. Fledglings will be fully grown but wing and tail feathers may continue to grow. The beak will be mostly black and but lighter colour. The older the bird the darker it gets and by 8 years old will be mostly black with a white beak.

[image1 \(1\) \(JM\)](#)

She was very easy to catch as she was very slow and weak. She turned out to be a juvenile, not a fledgling and should have been out on her own. I hand fed her small strips of meat with fluids (also subcutaneous fluids) and after discussions with Rohan Goyné (Melrose Animal Hospital, Wodonga) she was prescribed oral antibiotics. Thank you to Kiewa Veterinary Clinic for the use of their scales, Harriet weighed 2.45 kg. The average female weighs between 3 and 5.8 kg so she was very under-weight.

[image5 \(JM\)](#)

Harriet had no energy to even perch but with the help of the antibiotics for a week and being fed small meals she started improving. By the 8th January her strength had built up so she could perch on the first level perch by climbing up pole.

[image2 \(JM\)](#)

By the 12th of January Harriet was flying between the top two perches with ease.

At present Harriet is building up strength and body muscle and her appetite is growing daily.

Jo is a registered wildlife carer. Her dedication to the survival of Harriet is to be admired.

Thankyou Jo for sharing this experience.

Grey Spotted Wave â?? *Dithalama cosmospila* â?? Eileen Collins

This beautifully patterned moth is a female Wave belonging to the Geometridae.family.

The Waves recorded in Victoria are small moths ranging in size from 10-20 millimetres.

The term Wave refers to the pattern on their wings. This particular species of moth is found in the drier areas of the state.

[Dithalama cosmospila Grey Spotted Wave fem Jan 15 \(EC\)](#)

Grey Spotted Wave â?? photo: Eileen Collins

The caterpillar of these species is a Looper, so called because it moves by moving forward in a looping movement.

Thanks to Peter Marriot of the Entomological Society for the identification.

Rangerâ??s Report â?? Brian Pritchard

Our staff are mostly back on normal business after extended fire duties. Crews are checking and clearing trees throughout the park.

We have commenced a pig control program in Mt Pilot section and have released some biological control agents for wheel cactus infestations near Eldorado.

Rainfall For December: 19 mm. Total for 2019: 448 mm (65% of average rainfall) which is the 9th driest in 134 years. In 2018 we had 457 mm (66% of average rainfall). Our last year with more than the average of 689 mm was in 2016 when 968 mm was recorded.

NEXT MEETING â?? SATURDAY 7th MARCH 2020

We will visit the Rutherglen Natural Features Reserve to inspect mammal nest boxes and check on weeds.

There are also some olives on the roadsides surrounding the reserve so please bring suitable implements.

Meet at the Chiltern Post Office at 9:00am. Field contact: Neville on 0412 399 239

Membership It's Time to Renew

Memberships expired on June 30th 2019. Thank you to all who have taken out membership this year. We hope you will continue your support. Friends have achieved a great deal during the past year. Surveys for plants, birds and monitoring, maintaining and surveying mammal boxes, tree planting, weed control and provision of brochures, interpretive signage and park furniture are just some of our contributions. Your support for our activities is valued and your membership renewal is vital to our cause. Membership expires on June 30th of each year.

Please ensure your contact details are current.

Please find enclosed my membership of \$15 for 2019-20. The fee covers the whole family and includes 11 newsletters.

Name: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Receipt required: Yes / No

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

If you wish to use electronic payment the details are:

Acc Name: Friends of Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park

Bank: WAW Credit Union Co-operative Ltd (Cuscal Limited)

BSB number: 803070

Acc number: 81167

Please add your surname to the transaction.

Please advise Tony (anthonymurnane9@gmail.com) or Neville (neville@nrbartlett.com.au) when you have made the payment to help us keep track of payments.

Category

1. Newsletters

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